

CLAIMS

1. A method of servicing a customer of a builder by a third-party website provider, such method comprising the steps of:

providing a first website by the third-party website provider for use by the customer in viewing and selecting product options of product offerings available from or through the builder;

providing a variety of related forms and services through the first website;

receiving from the customer through the first website a view and selection of an option of the options provided by the builder; and

collecting a fee or commission based upon the products viewed by and selections made by the customer.

2. The method of servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 1 wherein the step of providing related forms further comprise filtering and supplying product information, contract, financing, closing, and post-sale forms and information.

3. The method of servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 1 wherein the step of providing related services further comprises offering purchase and pre-purchase information, promoting a buyers' group service for volume discounts and advertising, providing lending, closing, title, tax, government, permits, insurance, inspection, appraisal, RESPA, utility, warrantee, and moving services, and providing post-closing warrantee and product information, and customer and sales support.

11. The method for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 1 wherein the step of collecting the fee or commission based upon the views and selections made by the customer further comprises collecting up-front access, semi-custom web design, and data service fees or commissions from the builder and third-party advertisers.

12. The method for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 1 wherein the step of providing the first website further comprises allowing manufacturers, sub-contractors, and suppliers to advertise their products through the system.

13. An apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder by a third-party website provider, such apparatus comprising:

means for providing a first website by the third-party website provider for use by the customer in viewing and selecting product options of product offerings available from the builder;

means for providing a variety of related forms and services through the first website;

means for receiving from the customer through the first website a view and selection of an option of the options provided by the builder; and

means for collecting a fee or commission based upon the products viewed by and selections made by the customer.

14. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 wherein the means for providing related forms further comprises means for filtering and generating contract, financing, closing, and post-sale forms and information.

15. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 wherein the means for providing related services

further comprises means for offering purchase and pre-purchase information, promoting a buyers' group service for volume discounts and advertising, facilitating lending, closing, title, tax, government, permits, insurance, inspection, appraisal, RESPA, utility, warrantee, and moving services, and providing post-closing warrantee and product information, and customer and sales support.

16. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 wherein the means for providing the first website further comprises means for offering an online deposit system.

17. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 16 wherein the means for offering the online deposit system further comprises means for purchasing extras.

18. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 wherein the means for providing the first website further comprises means for providing order verification and tracking.

19. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 further comprising means for collecting data concerning buying trends.

20. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 wherein the means for providing the first website further comprises means for allowing manufacturers, sub-contractors, and vendors to pre-view potential orders, groups of orders, and customer product viewings.

21. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 further comprising means for providing web and

communications tools to the builder, sub-contractors, and suppliers.

22. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 21 wherein the web tools further comprise e-mail, real-time chat, calendars, escrow, e-business, job reports, notices, attendance tracking, buyer satisfaction ratings, next day activity lists, job logs, messaging, post-its, sample requests, and threaded discussion groups.

23. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 wherein the means for collecting the fee or commission based upon the views and selections made by the customer further comprises means for collecting up-front access, semi-custom web design, and data service fees or commissions from the contractor.

24. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 13 wherein the means of providing the first website further comprises means for allowing manufacturers, sub-contractors, and suppliers to advertise their products through the system.

25. An apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder by a third-party website provider, such apparatus comprising:

a first website provided by the third-party website provider for use by the customer in viewing and selecting product options of product offerings available from the builder;

a variety of related forms and services through the first website;

31. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 25 further comprising a system for collecting data concerning buying trends.

32. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 25 wherein the first website further comprises a system for allowing manufacturers, sub-contractors, and vendors to pre-view potential orders, groups of orders, and customer product viewings.

33. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 25 further comprising web and communications tools available to the builder, sub-contractors, and suppliers.

34. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 33 wherein the web tools further comprise e-mail, real-time chat, calendars, escrow, e-business, job reports, notices, attendance tracking, buyer satisfaction ratings, next day activity lists, job logs, messaging, post-its, sample requests, and threaded discussion groups.

35. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 25 further comprising a system for collecting up-front access, semi-custom web design, and data service fee or commissions from the builder or third-party advertisers.

36. The apparatus for servicing a customer of a builder as in claim 25 wherein the first website further comprises a system for allowing manufacturers, sub-contractors, and suppliers to advertise their products.